



FOOD FACTS

From the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

The Dangers of Raw Milk

Unpasteurized Milk Can Pose a Serious Health Risk



Milk and milk products provide a wealth of nutrition benefits. But raw milk can harbor dangerous microorganisms that can pose serious health risks to you and your family. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 800 people in the United States have gotten sick from drinking raw milk or eating cheese made from raw milk since 1998.

Raw milk is milk from cows, sheep, or goats that has not been pasteurized to kill harmful bacteria. This raw, unpasteurized milk can carry dangerous bacteria such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *Listeria*, which are responsible for causing numerous foodborne illnesses.

These harmful bacteria can seriously affect the health of anyone who drinks raw milk, or eats foods made from raw milk. However, the bacteria in raw milk can be especially dangerous to **pregnant women, children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems.**

"Pasteurized Milk" Explained

Pasteurization is a process that kills harmful bacteria by heating milk to a specific temperature for a set period of time. First developed by Louis Pasteur in 1864, pasteurization kills harmful organisms responsible for such diseases as listeriosis, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, diphtheria, and brucellosis.

Research shows no meaningful difference in the nutritional values of pasteurized and unpasteurized milk. Pasteurized milk contains low levels of the type of nonpathogenic bacteria that can cause food spoilage, so storing your pasteurized milk in the refrigerator is still important.

Raw Milk & Pasteurization: Debunking Milk Myths

While pasteurization has helped provide safe, nutrient-rich milk and cheese for over 120 years, some people continue to believe that pasteurization harms milk and that raw milk is a safe, healthier alternative.

Here are some common myths and proven facts about milk and pasteurization:

- Pasteurizing milk **DOES NOT** cause lactose intolerance and allergic reactions. Both raw milk and pasteurized milk can cause allergic reactions in people sensitive to milk proteins.
- Raw milk **DOES NOT** kill dangerous pathogens by itself.
- Pasteurization **DOES NOT** reduce milk's nutritional value.
- Pasteurization **DOES NOT** mean that it is safe to leave milk out of the refrigerator for extended time, particularly after it has been opened.
- Pasteurization **DOES** kill harmful bacteria.
- Pasteurization **DOES** save lives.

Raw Milk and Serious Illness

Symptoms and Advice

Symptoms of foodborne illness include:

- Vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain
- Flulike symptoms such as fever, headache, and body ache

While most healthy people will recover from an illness caused by harmful bacteria in raw milk — or in foods made with raw milk — within a short period of time, some can develop symptoms that are chronic, severe, or even life-threatening.

If you or someone you know becomes ill after consuming raw milk or products made from raw milk — or, if you are pregnant and think you could have consumed contaminated raw milk or cheese — see a doctor or healthcare provider immediately.

The Dangers of Listeria and Pregnancy

Pregnant women run a serious risk of becoming ill from the bacteria *Listeria*, which can cause miscarriage, fetal death, or illness or death of a newborn.

If you are pregnant, consuming raw milk — or foods made from raw milk, such as Mexican-style cheese like Queso Blanco or Queso Fresco — can harm your baby even if you don't feel sick.



Safety ■ Health ■ Science ■ Nutrition

October 2006